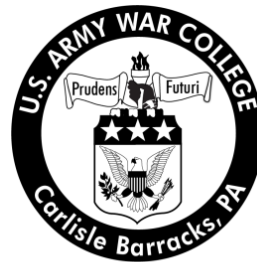


## ISAF Transition and Transformation – Focus Shift for a Stronger Afghanistan

by

Colonel Gregory C. Baine  
United States Army



United States Army War College  
Class of 2012

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**ISAF TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION – FOCUS SHIFT FOR A STRONGER  
AFGHANISTAN**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The relevance of current organizational structures, roles, visions, essential tasks, and resource prioritization for NATO and Coalition forces in Afghanistan requires careful analysis. Additionally, the accelerated Coalition force drawdown and the goal of having the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) assume the lead for security by end-2014, possibly end-2013, adds urgency to the relevance examination of force structure, etc., within the NATO and Coalition organization in Afghanistan. This research project considers transition within Afghanistan and the subsequent transformation within the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to meet current Congressional demands and those within a post-2014 environment. A right-sized, restructured ISAF must be efficient yet retain capabilities to achieve strategic objectives. Department of Defense (DoD) and ISAF senior leaders must work to ensure that the progress and gains made with the Afghan government and its National Security Forces endure.





## ISAF TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION – FOCUS SHIFT FOR A STRONGER AFGHANISTAN

To become a viable state, Afghanistan will need a functional, credible defense apparatus that can secure the country and protect the Afghan population. Senior Afghan political and military leaders will soon find themselves working without the current levels of nurturing from the international community. The accelerated Coalition force drawdown and the goal of having the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) assume the lead for security by end-2014, possibly to shift to end-2013, adds urgency to the relevance examination of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) force structure, roles, visions, essential tasks, and resource prioritization within the NATO and Coalition organization in Afghanistan.

On February 2, 2012, U.S. Defense Secretary (SECDEF) Leon Panetta stated that U.S. forces would transfer the lead role in combat operations to Afghanistan National Security Forces in 2013.<sup>1</sup> Secretary Panetta surprised allies on February 1, 2012, when he stated that the U.S. combat mission would end in 2013; however, he later clarified his remarks when he emphasized that U.S. troops would remain “combat ready” in Afghanistan. According to Secretary Panetta’s latest statements, the U.S. mission in Afghanistan would shift to a train-and-assist role as Afghan forces take responsibility for security before the anticipated end-2014 deadline for full Afghan control.<sup>2</sup> CIA Director and former ISAF Commander David Petraeus stated that the SECDEF’s comments were “overanalyzed” and were “exactly in line” with the policy started last summer.<sup>3</sup> Final decisions on the pace of troop withdrawals from Afghanistan and the hand-over to the ANSF are not due to be made until President Obama and fellow NATO leaders meet at the May 2012 NATO summit in Chicago.<sup>4</sup> Since the 2013

deadline is pre-decisional, this paper will refer to the end-2014 requirement for transition to ANSF lead for security.<sup>5</sup>

The U.S., NATO, and coalition partners have depended on ISAF to build self-sustaining national security forces in Afghanistan. ISAF works to develop Afghan security forces capacity via its subordinate organization, NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A). ISAF Joint Command (IJC) serves as the operational component of ISAF. NTM-A works to recruit, train, and equip Afghan soldiers and police while also building institutional training capacity within the ANSF. Additionally, NTM-A serves as the steward for the expenditure of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) that finances the growth, training, equipping, and sustainment of the ANSF.

Figure 1 outlines the COIN-centric ISAF Campaign Design as of February 2011.

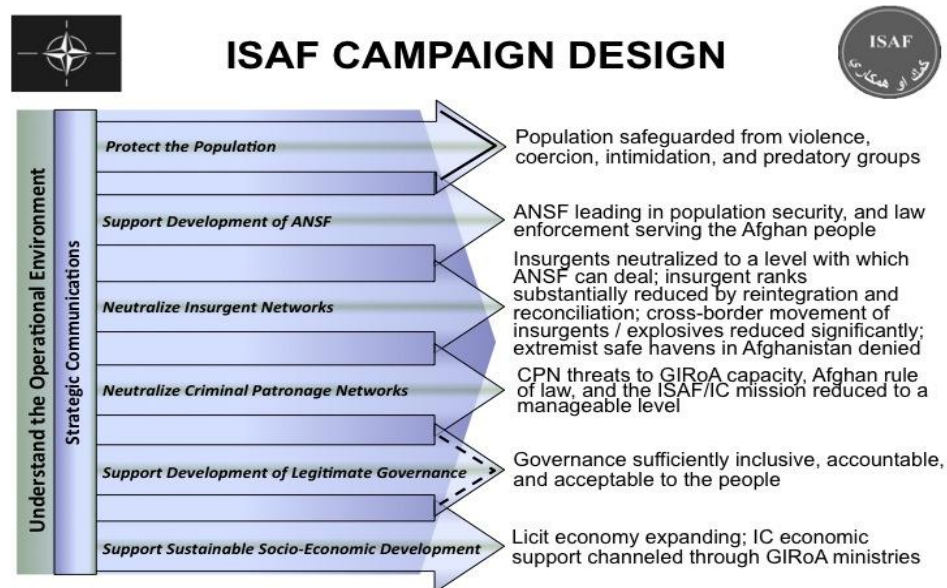


Figure 1.<sup>6</sup>

The six lines of effort (LOE), Protect the Population, Support Development of ANSF, Neutralize Insurgent Networks, Neutralize Criminal Patronage Networks, Support Development of Legitimate Governance, and Support Sustainable Socio-Economic

Development, each point to the associated strategic objective intended for accomplishment by 2014. The purpose of the design is to synchronize ISAF efforts across the LOEs so that the combined effects of these activities apply pressure on the insurgency. “Understanding the Operational Environment” and “Strategic Communications” underpin the six lines of effort. The double-headed arrow for “Protect the Population” indicates the ISAF Main Effort LOE, while the dotted arrow highlights the Governance LOE as the key Supporting Effort.

As progress toward Afghans assuming lead for security moves apace, ISAF should consider adjusting its campaign design by shifting the main effort to “Supporting ANSF Development.” ISAF transition to ANSF-lead for Afghan security and population protection would create the opportunity for ISAF to transform to a leaner, more specialized organization. A smaller ISAF, still capable of building capacity within an increasingly proficient ANSF, must include an adjusted campaign design as part of its transformation. As part of its new campaign design, ISAF should shift priorities of effort and resources from an operational and security endeavor to one that reinforces progress made in developing enduring capabilities within the ANSF.

#### Transition to Afghan Lead

A central part of the U.S. and ISAF strategy in Afghanistan is to build capable ANSF that are credible to the Afghan people and responsible to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). The ANSF, which include the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), are scheduled to assume control over security responsibility for their country by end-2014. A left-shift to 2013 for the transfer of Afghanistan security lead could certainly thin U.S. troop involvement and hasten the

Coalition plans for ANSF development and equipping. A 2013 deadline could also prematurely rush Coalition preparations of the ANSF for security control.

The GIROA and ISAF are executing the transfer of security responsibility to the ANSF in phases. In each phase ISAF is transferring more of the operating environment to the ANSF for security lead and responsibility. Figure 2 highlights phases one and two of security transition to the ANSF.

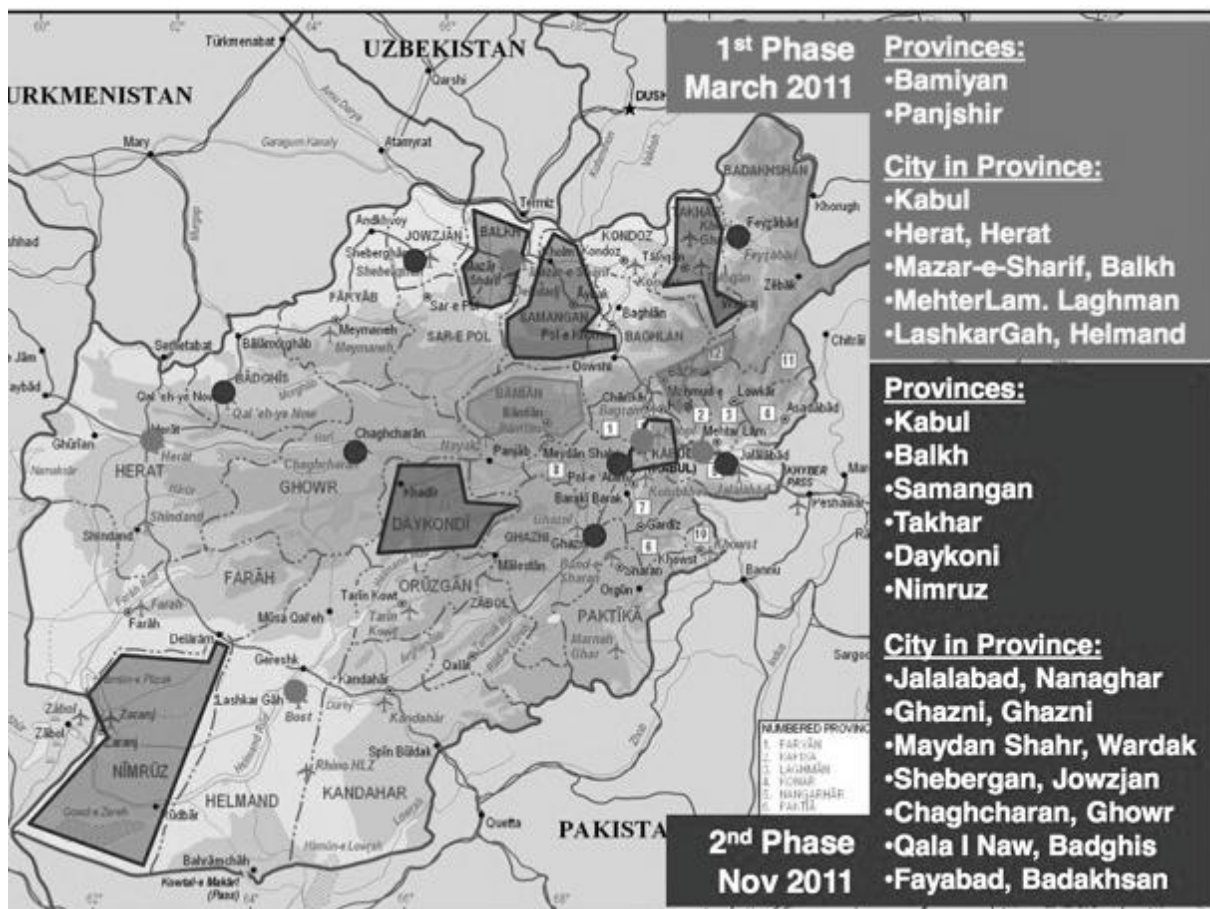


Figure 2.<sup>7</sup>

In March 2011, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai announced that by July 2011 security responsibility for two provinces and five cities would transfer from ISAF to the ANSF, thus, completing phase one of security transition. Phase one included the

transfer of provinces and cities that were either uncontested or included low levels of insurgent activity. While ISAF forces are still present in the transferred provinces and cities, their responsibilities include combat support, logistics support, and training and mentoring the ANSF.<sup>8</sup> On November 26, 2011, Karzai introduced phase two of the security transition process and indicated that more than half of Afghanistan would be under control of Afghan forces. ISAF and the GIRoA did not specify the end date of phase two. Phase two of the transition process includes six provinces and seven cities, all of which have experienced higher levels of enemy activity.<sup>9</sup>

A functionally organized ISAF, with efficiencies built within its structure, will ensure that transition to Afghan lead for security remains on track. IJC, as the Coalition operational organization, provides the means to secure the population as necessary and to mentor ANSF operational forces. NTM-A builds enduring capacity and capability for ANSF self-sustainment. As the predominant subordinate organizations within ISAF, IJC and NTM-A have made important gains since April 2011, reversing violence trends in several provinces and districts.<sup>10</sup>

There appear to be no unambiguous indicators that the insurgency is targeting the transition process. Given the recent progress in security, capacity and capability increases within the ANSF, the U.S. redeployed ten thousand of its service members by the end of 2011, and the entire surge force of 33,000 personnel will return to the U.S. by the end of September 2012. Approximately 68,000 U.S. troops, however, will remain in Afghanistan following this drawdown, and ISAF is currently developing a recommendation for future force levels.<sup>11</sup>

NATO's top official, Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, noted that the transition process does not mean an end to the international community's work in Afghanistan. "We will keep our commitment to training and supporting the Afghan security forces throughout the transition process, and beyond," Rasmussen said. British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, has stated, "The Afghan national security forces are demonstrating that they are more capable day by day . . . circumstances remain challenging but steady and positive progress is being made."<sup>12</sup> As the GIRoA and the ANSF assume security responsibility in more districts and provinces, and as the need for U.S. operational forces dwindles, ISAF should place increased emphasis on building efficiencies within its structure and reshaping its campaign design. Similarly, ISAF should reinforce success by shifting resources within its organization to capitalize on its progress.

The Afghan national army and police, under the authority of the Ministries of Defense and Interior (MoD and MoI) respectively, are expected to assume full responsibility for the security of Afghanistan and protection of the Afghan people by the effective date of Transition. Although the U.S. and the international community accepted responsibility for building the ANA and ANP at the first Bonn Conference on Afghanistan Development in late-2001, serious efforts to strengthen the professionalism and accountability of the national security forces began only in 2009.<sup>13</sup> The shift from an exclusive focus on force generation was slow to take effect. The commander of NTM-A (COMNTM-A) acknowledged, "Before November 2009, the singular focus was on quantity, recruitment, and assignment of soldiers and police with little or no training, paying them less than a living wage, and an inability to properly develop leaders."<sup>14</sup>

Given the fragile progress that the ANSF have made and the daunting challenges that lie ahead for GIRoA, coupled with U.S. demands for leaner military structures, ISAF will need to be robust enough to ensure that the ANSF can remain viable beyond Transition. Although the U.S. has spent approximately \$444 billion in Afghanistan since late-2001, careful consideration should be given to the potential consequences of prematurely discontinuing funding and support. Without continued foreign assistance Afghanistan will be unable to pay for basic services for its burgeoning security forces.<sup>15</sup> Those expenses will have grown to twice the size of GIRoA revenues and will result in a shortfall of about \$7.8 billion annually, or about 25 percent of the country's gross domestic product by 2021.<sup>16</sup>

#### Bonn II and the Transformation Decade

On November 10-11, 2011, the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) conducted a workshop with thirty Afghans to develop transition recommendations for the International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn on December 5, 2011 (Bonn II). The workshop focused on the transition process for 2012 through 2014. ZIF, et al, developed recommendations within the following six areas: security, reconciliation and reintegration / political settlement, economy and private sector, basic services, rule of law and justice, civil society and media. The security recommendation specified,

NATO partners should focus on building capabilities within the Afghan security forces until 2014 and beyond. NTM-A should continue its training efforts parallel to the efforts of regional partners. Other NATO forces should accelerate the transition to Afghan security leadership, shift their focus from combating the insurgency, and redeploy towards advising and assisting Afghan forces.<sup>17</sup>

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton led the U.S. delegation to the Bonn II meeting. The conference included eighty-six countries and fifteen international

organizations. The most important outcome was a commitment by the international community to stay engaged in Afghanistan beyond the completion of the security transition, and through the “transformation decade” up to the end of 2024.<sup>18</sup> Secretary Clinton endorsed conclusions that called for “mutual accountability between Afghanistan and the international community . . . and supported the political and economic vision the Afghans presented for their future.”<sup>19</sup>

Key discussion topics at Bonn II included the future of Afghanistan and the goal of continued international support to Afghanistan beyond 2014. Such support would include: preventing violence from reaching intolerable levels again; helping the government develop its capacity to provide the services that its citizens depend on, in particular a less corrupt and more efficient system of administering justice; creating the scope for economic progress, including the exploitation of the country’s plentiful mineral and energy resources; and sending a clear message to Afghanistan’s neighbors that the country is not going to be abandoned as happened in the past.<sup>20</sup> Speaking to nearly 1,000 delegates at Bonn II regarding Afghanistan’s future, Afghanistan President Karzai emphasized continued regional cooperation, international aid, and military training.

“Afghanistan will certainly need help for another 10 years, until around 2024; we will need training for our own troops. We will need equipment for the army and police and help to set up state institutions. If we lose this fight, we are threatened with a return to a situation like before September 11, 2001.”<sup>21</sup>

Bonn II marked a potential shift from Transition to a decade of transformation (2014-2024). The GIRoA must assume responsibilities as a sovereign nation-state, chief of which is to maintain, and establish where necessary, transparent institutions that are credible to the Afghan citizenry. The reality on the ground suggests that Afghanistan will not be ready to welcome a decade of transformation if the Afghan



government does not maintain a level of security and political stability from now through whenever Transition is complete. This will require the Afghan government, Afghanistan's international partners and regional neighbors, to be transparent and accountable in their civilian and military efforts.<sup>22</sup>

Some would argue that Afghanistan is not worth the continued support, either in financial or human capital. A few indicators might suggest otherwise: 1) under the Taliban 1.2 million children were in schools, hardly any of them girls; today there are 8.2m, 40% of whom are girls; 2) only 8% of the population had access to basic health care, today 80% has access; 3) the role of women has changed fundamentally: 27% of seats in the lower house of Parliament are held by women; 4) 60% of Afghans own a mobile-phone; and 5) a thriving and outspoken media is represented by 75 television stations and 175 radio stations.<sup>23</sup>

The increasingly capable and credible ISAF-trained ANSF, notably the ANP that is closest to the people, should receive most of the credit for setting the conditions of positive progress within Afghanistan. Confident ANSF will earn the credibility of the Afghan citizenry through the legitimacy of their actions to protect the people and secure the nation. Risks abound to the nascent nation-state and its security apparatus. Violent extremist networks will more than likely press hard to overcome endured losses, even though a limited negotiation process is underway. However, a safe, assured population who can provide for families and pursue prosperity will produce confidence in the GIRoA, which through the trust, faith, confidence, and earned credibility of its people will ultimately give rise to the strength of a nation.

## Looking Ahead

As force levels decrease, DoD will eventually look at alternative ways to build within the Afghan defense establishment an enduring capability and force generation capacity to provide security. Such a system will have to be Afghan-sustainable beyond the transition date to Afghan-lead for security. As the United States and its coalition partners evaluate the eventual shift from combat operations to security force assistance, decision makers should closely consider the implications for the size, shape, scope, and doctrine of future forces. Currently, conditions within the region warrant a continued focus within the U.S. government and DoD to complete the development of enduring capacity within the Afghan defense forces, by, with, and through Afghan senior leaders, that is in line with the U.S. National Security Strategy. President Karzai's request at the Bonn II Conference for continued support through 2024 reinforced the notion of continued Coalition support.

On January 31, 2012, James R. Clapper Jr., U.S. Director of National Intelligence (DNI), testified to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that ISAF's efforts to partner with Afghan national security forces are encouraging. The DNI's statement, however, that "... corruption and governance challenges continue to threaten the Afghan forces' operational effectiveness," could cause senior U.S. government officials to think twice about too hastily leaving Afghanistan. Clapper stressed that for the U.S. to achieve success with the Afghan forces, ISAF must continue to support Afghanistan. More importantly, Afghanistan will need support from its neighbors, particularly Pakistan.<sup>24</sup> According to the DNI, ISAF partnering and mentoring have begun to show signs of sustainable progress at the tactical and ministerial levels; however, "corruption

as well as poor leadership and management will threaten ANSF operational effectiveness.” Clapper went on to highlight, “Although there is broad international political support for the Afghan government, there are doubts in many capitals, particularly those in Europe, about how to fund Afghanistan initiatives after 2014.”<sup>25</sup>

ISAF will undoubtedly transition its organization into a leaner structure to meet partner nation capabilities and plans, U.S. budget demands, goals and objectives of the National Command Authority, and to fall in line with the intent of Bonn II. Conditions in Afghanistan, post-Transition, could warrant an ISAF organization weighted more toward an NTM-A-type body, with emphasis placed on advise and assist roles rather than operational and combat oriented missions. NTM-A could very well become the supported organization within ISAF. Should that occur, IJC could become the supporting headquarters with its operational forces providing the required security and escort duties for the NTM-A units advising brigade-level and above ANSF formations and commanders.

In an interview in mid-November, 2011, U.S. General John Allen, commander of ISAF (COMISAF), stated that by the end of 2014 ISAF-led conventional military operations would discontinue and that the U.S. would draw down to a “much smaller residual force.”<sup>26</sup> While the date may shift to the left, given the SECDEF’s pronouncement on February 2, 2012, according to General Allen the U.S. and allied force’s mission would be reduced to:

- Training and mentoring of the ANSF;
- Providing enabler functions such as helicopter transportation, medical treatment, and intelligence gathering (air support including ground attack will probably also be needed); and
- Counterterrorism operations, to be provided by U.S. and allied special operations forces.<sup>27</sup>

The ANSF currently number 301,000 troops. By October 2012, the ANSF are slated to grow to 353,000, consisting of 191,000 troops in the Afghan National Army (ANA) and 162,000 patrolmen in the Afghan National Police (ANP). After October 2012, ISAF will concentrate its training and mentoring on professionalizing the ANSF. Additionally, ISAF will work to develop enabler functions needed for a self-sustained ANSF, although the process will not be complete by the end of 2014.<sup>28</sup>

There is widespread doubt that the 353,000 ANSF end strength is either sustainable or permanent. Given a potential \$4 billion shortfall in ANSF support beyond Transition, ISAF should continue to look at alternative ways to build within the Afghan defense establishment an enduring force generation capacity to provide security – a system that is Afghan-sustainable.<sup>29</sup> Such a capability should include a deliberate, efficient, and Afghan-sustainable ANSF education system that develops credible ANSF leadership. The ISAF structure, post-Transition, should be such that it can continue with and build upon the gains made within the ANSF institutional training system. The GIROA and conditions within Afghanistan should influence the ways and means ISAF uses to complete its development of the ANSF professional education system, and the eventual shift of the ISAF focus to advise and assist roles.

#### 2010 Surge Effects and Recommendations

The surge of 2010 seems to have halted the momentum of violent extremist organizations in Afghanistan, particularly in the southern region. As Coalition nations redeploy their forces, ISAF should organize in such a manner that will enable the remaining units and organizations to take advantage of the progress made and to reinforce the momentum of the surge. U.S. decision makers will undoubtedly work

within a resource-constrained environment as they develop a leaner more specialized ISAF that will enable the ANSF and the GIRoA to prevail over internal threats in a post-Transition environment. Such an environment will surely be one of uncertainty and potential volatility within which the Afghans will be in the lead of their security.

Concluding her recent visit to Afghanistan in October 2011, Linda Robinson, Adjunct Senior Fellow for U.S. National Security and Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, offered six critical factors that GIRoA leadership and perhaps even ISAF should address between now and this summer, the next fighting season, when more troops go home. Robinson suggested that addressing the following six factors could turn the momentum in the favor of the GIRoA.<sup>30</sup>

1. Promptly reaching a strategic partnership agreement in which the United States pledges to continue providing security and economic assistance after 2014 could go a long way toward reducing Afghan fears of abandonment.<sup>31</sup>
2. Forging a common front with his main backer, the United States, would help Karzai repair some of the image of weakness that plagues his government.<sup>32</sup>
3. Afghan security forces need to move demonstrably into the lead.<sup>33</sup>
4. The expanding self-defense initiative may increase security.<sup>34</sup>
5. Promises to rural Afghans should be moderated but honored.<sup>35</sup>
6. Pakistan is the glaring problem that has dramatically worsened and must be addressed.<sup>36</sup>

Robinson concluded that the “battle of perceptions” could be won if the Afghan and U.S. governments can agree on a common plan, backed by a lower but sustainable level of U.S. troops. The GIRoA should be able to capitalize on the growing unpopularity of the insurgency and either defeat it or force it into a “political accommodation,” given U.S. assistance.<sup>37</sup> While developing capable ANSF may take another five or ten years, according to Robinson the alternative is not pleasant to consider: the U.S. departs too soon, Afghanistan crumbles, and the war fought to “avenge the 9/11 attacks,” says

Robinson, is perceived to have been a failure.<sup>38</sup> Robinson suggested, “Americans need to be prepared for wars to last a decade.” The Afghan war, that the U.S. attempted to fight largely through a counterterrorism approach for the first seven years, has only been waged in earnest during the last three years.<sup>39</sup>

### NTM-A Approach

As the enabling ISAF organization for building capable, enduring ANSF, NTM-A must make certain that four interrelated components are in place to ensure sustainability for the ANSF, post-Transition. NTM-A must (1) continue to create ANSF officer classes who can lead Afghan forces in place of coalition trainers; (2) ensure that the Afghan MoD and Mol are capable of controlling and overseeing the ANA and ANP; (3) continue to build Afghan-sustainable infrastructure for the ANSF; and (4) implement processes that enables ANSF self-sustainment.<sup>40</sup> These four goals will require ongoing Coalition support, both in human and financial resources, from a restructured, right-sized ISAF organization lean enough to meet budget constraints yet capable of meeting the demands of a post-Transition operating environment. NATO and coalition partners should focus on:

- **Training Afghan officers and an Afghan institutional training cadre.** A professional cadre of Afghan officers and instructors will sustain the ANA and ANP in the long term. Training leaders is challenging, more time-consuming, and more expensive than training ordinary recruits. It is essential that NATO’s coalition partners continue to send additional highly qualified trainers for this purpose and embed them where necessary.
- **Ministerial support program.** As part of Afghanistan’s democratization, coalition partners have deployed thousands of military and civilian advisors to Afghanistan’s various government ministries. More than 500 full-time coalition personnel have been deployed to the Afghan MoD and Mol. These two ministries will be responsible for oversight and management of the ANSF after 2014; however, they are

just coming to grips with the processes of national government. This ministerial support system will have to remain in place past 2014.

- **Financial support.** The U.S. has committed \$11.6 billion for NTM-A in 2011. \$12.6 billion will be spent in 2012. From 2013 onward, however, the U.S. will likely reduce its funding significantly. Afghanistan will be unable to self-finance the estimated \$6 billion annual cost of sustaining its security forces, therefore, exposing a dangerous risk to extremist vulnerability. The international community will have to be both generous and creative to ensure that these funds are available to Afghanistan until it has a national economic strategy.<sup>41</sup>

Figure 3 outlines the NTM-A vision for 2011 according to its former commander, LTG William Caldwell, IV. In addition to meeting growth objectives for the ANSF, NTM-A in May 2011 identified five lines of effort within which to dedicate resources.<sup>42</sup>

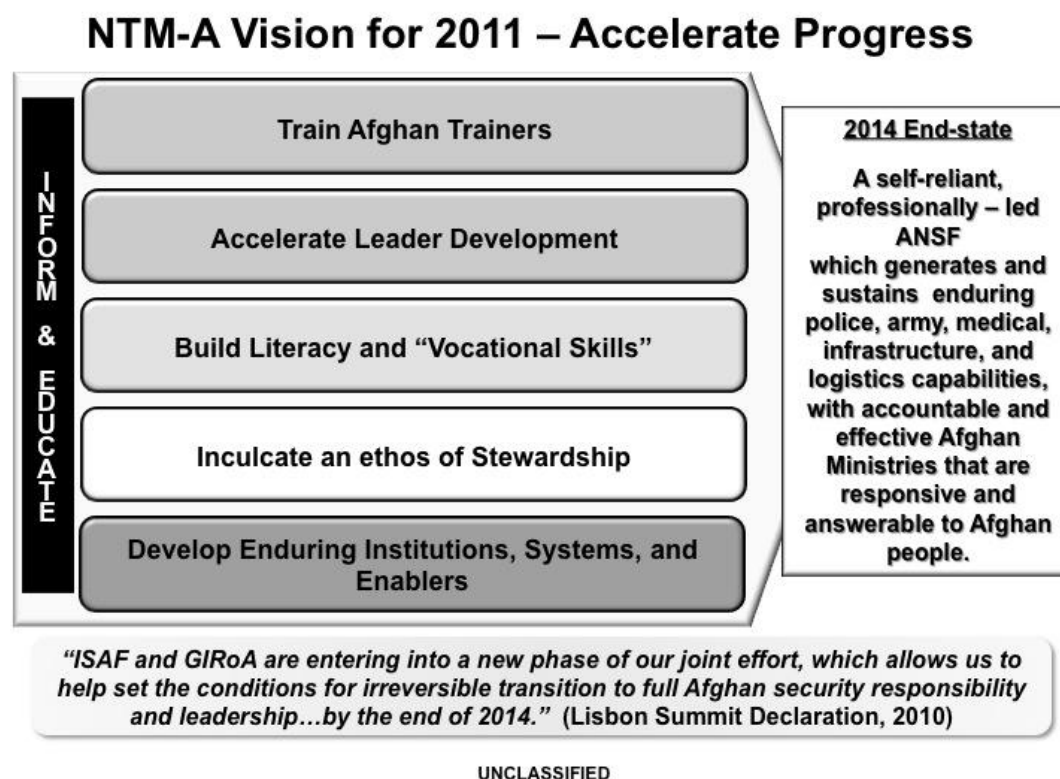


Figure 3.

The first LOE, Training Afghan Trainers, is the key to transition and was the Main Effort of NTM-A in 2011. NTM-A identified the critical requirement for the ANSF of “self-generating” quality Afghan trainers capable of leading and training the ANSF. NTM-A

set in place a train-the-trainer system in 2011 as part of a multi-year effort, intending to reach full output by 2012.<sup>43</sup>

Accelerating Leader Development requires NTM-A to actively recruit qualified candidates, then to develop them through innovative training courses and creative training techniques. The leader development system is a key component of the foundation for an ANSF capable of self-generating professional officers and non-commissioned officers.<sup>44</sup>

NTM-A will assist the GIRoA in providing the ANSF with a higher quality, self-reliant force via the Building Literacy and Vocational Skills LOE. NTM-A/CSTC-A's (Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan) goal is for Afghan instructors educate every member within the ANSF to at least the third grade level.<sup>45</sup>

To protect the nearly \$20 billion investment in developing, equipping, and sustaining the ANSF for 2011, NTM-A has emphasized the critical need for instilling an Ethos of Stewardship within the ANSF. ISAF forces must teach the importance of resource accountability and maintenance at all levels of training and education, and set the example in all activity. ISAF must place the appropriate emphasis now on stewardship, through its subordinate units and headquarters, and develop within the ANSF a culture of accountability and maintenance. The work of NTM-A to develop an enduring literacy program, by, with, and through Afghan instructors, for the ANSF is a large part of the Ethos of Stewardship LOE.<sup>46</sup>

The last LOE, Developing Self-Sustainable Systems and Enduring Institutions, reinforces the need to build capability within the ministries to support ANSF operational units, and the ANSF training base. The ANSF will require a more robust capability to



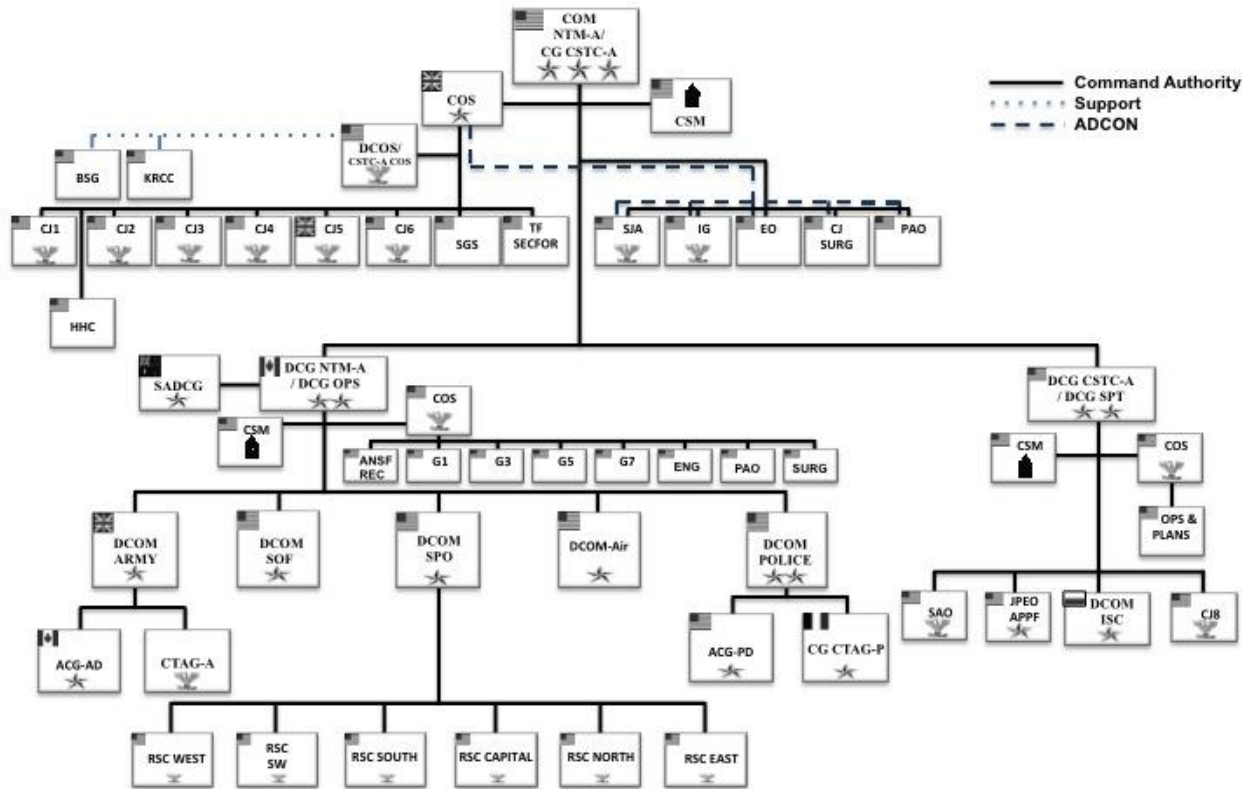
conduct strategic planning, budgeting, and resourcing. NTM-A is continuing to develop and operationalize ANSF sustainment systems, i.e., logistics, personnel, medical, and intelligence.<sup>47</sup>

Underpinning all lines of effort within COMNTM-A's vision is the reinforced concept of Civilian Control of the Military. NTM-A assists the Ministries of Defense and Interior in developing Afghan national policies that support such important concepts. Finally, NTM-A promotes a rigorous Afghan-led strategic communications program to ensure all policies and procedures are uniformly understood.<sup>48</sup>

On 5 November 2011, new COMNTM-A, LTG Dan Bolger, issued his Mission Statement and Intent for NTM-A.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, LTG Bolger has streamlined the NTM-A/CSTC-A structure and reorganized it along Advise (Operations) and Assist (Support) functions (Figure 4).

- **Mission.** NTM-A/CSTC-A supports ISAF/USFOR-A to enable accountable, Afghan-led security not later than 31 December 2014.
- **Intent.** Enable the Afghans to protect their people – that's why we're here. By, with and through the GIRoA, we support the ISAF/USFOR-A campaign. In support of IJC, we generate and sustain ANSF to ensure maximum impact on the current fight. In support of the ANSF, we develop Afghan leaders. In support of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, we build enduring institutional capacity. Throughout, we'll seek to see the ANSF as they are: operating forces, generating forces, and the Ministries. Success equals Afghan small units that fight and win, tactically effective ANSF leaders, and accountable Afghan security ministries that can direct and sustain operations.<sup>50</sup>

# NTM-A/CSTC-A Task Organization



As of 18 November 2011

Figure 4.

The Deputy Commander (DCOM) of NTM-A serves as the DCOM for Operations. The DCOMs for Afghan Army, Special Operations, Air and Police development, and the DCOM for Support Operations assist the NTM-A DCOM-Operations in developing the capacity of ANSF operational units and the capability of the ANSF Training Command. The DCOM-Support assists the COMNTM-A with program development for the ANSF, and with managing and stewarding the expenditure of the Afghanistan Security Force Fund (ASFF).<sup>51</sup>

As ISAF transforms, it should reinforce NTM-A's endeavor to develop Afghan-sustainable systems and enduring Afghan institutions, and to strengthen capability

within the Ministries of Defense and Interior. NTM-A maintains a robust capacity to conduct strategic planning, budgeting, and resourcing not only for the ANSF, but also for NATO forces within the theater. Additionally, in his dual-hatted capacity as Commander, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (COMCSTC-A), COMNTM-A stewards the multi-billion dollar Afghanistan Security Force Fund (ASFF) budget from the U.S. Congress.

### Positioning GIRoA and ANSF for Success

Strengthening Afghanistan to stand on its own as a capable nation-state will require skillful diplomacy that should lead all other lines of effort. Senior U.S. and NATO leaders must synchronize the political and the military elements into a transparent, Afghan-acceptable way ahead that clarifies U.S.-NATO objectives and eliminates such negative Afghan perceptions as the U.S. use of Afghanistan as a strategic power projection location for Asia and the Middle East. Ambassador Crocker and General Allen must create a civil-military road map that integrates diplomatic, political, economic, and military strategies.<sup>52</sup> The way ahead should work backward from 2014, when Karzai's constitutional power is slated to transfer to his elected successor, and when the ANSF are scheduled to assume lead for security.<sup>53</sup>

President Obama's directive to reduce the U.S. force presence in Afghanistan from 100,000 to 68,000 by end-September 2012 will require an adjusted strategy that will creatively employ the remaining units. The ANSF and leadership within the Ministries of Defense and Interior will have to assume the lead for more responsibilities quicker than they may think they are ready. The campaign plan for 2012 and 2013 focuses on the following key priorities: secure areas south of Kabul so the part of the

country's nationwide "Ring Road" connecting Kabul to Kandahar can be safely traveled; consolidate security forces' "hold" in the south, while gradually handing off more responsibility to the Afghan forces; and continue to build Afghan security forces to their needed size and capability.<sup>54</sup>

The manning, training, and equipping of sufficient Afghan army and police units by 2013 will require more trainers and mentors from Coalition nations, and a shift in emphasis within ISAF. A new focus shift should have NTM-A assuming the theater Main Effort, with IJC in support. ISAF should then shift resource priority from IJC to NTM-A. Additionally, ANSF recruits must not only complete basic training, but they should also spend at least a year embedded within NATO-mentored units.<sup>55</sup> While Afghan soldiers and patrolmen have become very nationalistic in terms of commitment to protecting their people and securing the nation, they are not yet ready to handle the job on their own, which is why we cannot rush to the door in Afghanistan.<sup>56</sup>

The focus of the ISAF Campaign Design should soon shift to ANSF training support, given the potential for an earlier transition date to Afghan lead for security.<sup>57</sup> At the May 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago, President Obama and COMISAF should consider announcing a mission change from counterinsurgency to ANSF training support.<sup>58</sup> NATO forces could maintain the lead in the heavily contested eastern and southern areas up to Transition, or until conditions warrant complete transition to ANSF-lead. Embedded U.S. and Coalition advisory teams could assist the NATO mission of supporting Afghan troops, with the intent of gradually weaning Afghan leadership away from Coalition dependency. U.S. adviser teams, formed from current U.S. Army units,

could train then deploy circa 2013. Substantial U.S. forces would remain in Afghanistan through the 2013 and 2014 fighting seasons in a backup and partnering role.<sup>59</sup>

The U.S. should keep its troop total in Afghanistan as close to 68,000 through Transition as is politically and fiscally possible, while aggressively emphasizing, both in Afghanistan and at home, transition to ANSF-lead.<sup>60</sup> Even after 2014, the GIRoA may still need 15,000-20,000 foreign troops for training, mentoring, air support, special operations, and logistics.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the U.S. and NATO will need an adjusted military plan that best supports a renewed diplomatic and political approach toward a legitimate GIRoA that is committed to and credible among the Afghan people. Accordingly, ISAF will have to retool itself into an organization that can operate efficiently within an environment of dwindling resources. A restructured ISAF, with an adjusted campaign design, will reinforce what has been built within the GIRoA and ANSF. A modest yet sustained U.S. support role, focused on the ANSF support line of effort, could strengthen the foundation of the ANSF and still retain moderate U.S. public support.

#### Future ISAF Structure and Leadership

The GIRoA's assumption of security responsibility earlier than the expected end-2014, the drawdown of Coalition forces, and the likely reduction of overall financial support to Afghanistan, will affect the Afghan political and military enterprises. ISAF must consider a relevant structure for effectiveness within an environment of shrinking resources. Currently, ISAF is predominately operationally focused and organized. The structure of ISAF for success beyond Transition should include emphasis placed on, and priority of resources given to, the appropriate three-star headquarters, IJC or NTM-

A. Since NTM-A has been focused on enabling a self-sustaining ANSF, ISAF should task and resource NTM-A with continued capacity and capability building of the ANSF and Ministries of Defense and Interior. As the Main Effort in Afghanistan, NTM-A would receive priority of effort and resources in an environment where GIRoA is in charge of the nation's security.

If not doing so already, the Office of the Secretary of Defense should consider whether, post-Transition, there would be a need for a four-star level ISAF headquarters with two subordinate three-star level headquarters. Additionally, I offer the following areas for consideration:

- Restructuring ISAF to best assist and mentor ANSF brigade-level commanders, given pending budgetary constraints and a dwindling ASFF. ISAF should determine how best to enable NTM-A and IJC, through mission prioritization and resourcing, to execute the strategic plan in a global environment where the attention of the U.S. National Command Authority and U.S. national resources will shift more to the Asia-Pacific region.
- Restructuring the Regional Commands (RC) to best support the strategic objectives of a post-Transition ISAF. ISAF could either have the six Regional Support Commands (RSC) of NTM-A as subordinate elements of the six Regional Commands, or restructure the RCs as part of a streamlined IJC as a supporting effort to NTM-A. The RCs may not need two-star level commanders with the accompanying division-level staffs.
- Beyond Transition, and should the RCs downsize to brigade level force structures, augmenting the staffs of the six NTM-A RSCs. As the operational forces within IJC

draw down, ISAF could reinforce and functionally organize each RSC to accomplish its ANSF advise and assist role. The RSCs would assume regional mission command from the RCs, working to achieve ANSF support related and capacity building objectives. A brigadier general, with accompanying multi-national staff, would command each RSC. The deputy commander would be a U.S. colonel who would oversee the expenditure and stewardship of the U.S.-provided ASFF within the region.

- Designating IJC as the operational Supporting Effort to NTM-A, the ISAF Main Effort, in the post-Transition operating environment.

### Conclusion

NTM-A and IJC will no doubt bear the burden of implementing a more non-lethally focused security assistance strategy within a strategic environment of diminishing financial resources and popular resolve. Notwithstanding the challenges ahead, the plan should emphasize achieving objectives by not necessarily doing more with less, but by doing what is important with what is available. Considering that the demise of Osama bin Laden has crippled al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan, it is unlikely that the Afghanistan Theater of Operations will require the same large-scale level of effort as experienced between 2010 and end-2011.

The future ISAF campaign design should incorporate a leaner ISAF organization aligned along adjusted functional priorities, namely support to the ANSF, working by, with, and through Afghan leadership. The future campaign design should emphasize efficiencies within ISAF. Additionally, ISAF should shift resources to the most appropriate organization best suited to develop enduring capacity within Afghanistan's

institutions, predominantly the Ministries of Defense and Interior, and the ANSF. The strength of the nation lies within the strength of a capable, confident defense apparatus credible to the Afghan people. It is up to an appropriately structured and resourced ISAF, reinforced by its NATO and State Department partnership, to build the capacity and capabilities within the ANSF and GIRoA so that Afghanistan's strength endures.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> David Alexander, "U.S. Tries to Ease Confusion Over Afghanistan Plans," *Reuters*, February 2, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/02/us-afghanistan-idUSTRE8100E520120202?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&rpc=71>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> A shift to the left of a year for security transition in Afghanistan does not change the premise of this paper. "Transition" will hereafter refer to post-2013 or post-2014 transition of Afghan lead for security.

<sup>6</sup> ISAF CJMED Overview Brief, Jan 2011, [http://www.health.mil/Libraries/2011\\_MHS\\_Conference\\_Breakout\\_A/A2\\_D\\_Smith.pptx](http://www.health.mil/Libraries/2011_MHS_Conference_Breakout_A/A2_D_Smith.pptx).

<sup>7</sup> CJ Radin, "Transfer of Security Responsibility Will Test Afghan National Security Forces," *The Long War Journal*, November 29, 2011, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/transfer\\_of\\_security.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/transfer_of_security.php).

<sup>8</sup> CJ Radin, "Karzai Announces July Transfer of Responsibility from ISAF to Afghan National Security Forces," *The Long War Journal*, March 27, 2011, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2011/03/karzai\\_announces\\_transfer\\_of\\_s.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2011/03/karzai_announces_transfer_of_s.php).

<sup>9</sup> Emal Haidary, "Afghanistan Moving to More Local Control," *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 28, 2011, <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/afghanistan-moving-to-more-local-control-20111128-1o1s0.html>.

<sup>10</sup> "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," October 2011, Department of Defense, 56.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.



<sup>12</sup> “Karzai: Afghan Forces to Take Lead in More Areas,” *USA Today*, November 27, 2011, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/story/2011-11-27/karzai-afghanistan-security/51419974/1>.

<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Barber, “No Time to Lose, Promoting the Accountability of the ANSF,” Oxfam International, May 10, 2011, <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/afghanistan-no-time-to-lose-20110510-en.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Juergen Baetz and Anne Gearan, “Planning Afghanistan’s Future Beyond 2014,” *Boston Globe*, December 4, 2011, [http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2011/12/04/planning\\_afghanistans\\_future\\_beyond\\_2014/?page=2](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2011/12/04/planning_afghanistans_future_beyond_2014/?page=2).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Center for International Peace Operations, “Managing Enteqal: Milestones for Transition in Afghanistan 2012-2014,” November 2011, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Department of State Cable, “Read-Out of Bonn Conference on Afghanistan,” Unclassified State 00121992, Reference: State 113766.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> “Afghanistan, What Comes Next,” *The Economist*, December 3, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/21540999?fsrc=rss>.

<sup>21</sup> Reuters, “Afghans Need Decade of Help,” *The Express Tribune, with the International Herald Tribune*, December 4, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/302098/afghans-need-decade-of-help-karzai-says-before-bonn-talks>.

<sup>22</sup> Mariam Safi, “Bonn II: From Transition to Transformation in Afghanistan,” *Defense Professionals News*, December 22, 2011, <http://www.defpro.com/news/details/30964/?SID=7756a7fcbbeae88b75856423ad868617>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,” January 31, 2012, 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> CJ Radin, “U.S. Military’s Role in Afghanistan after 2014,” *The Long War Journal*, November 13, 2011, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/us\\_military\\_role\\_in.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/us_military_role_in.php).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "Afghan Security Funds May Drop After 2014," *United Press International*, December 2, 2011, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2011/12/02/Afghan-security-funds-may-drop-after-2014/UPI-94371322843250](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2011/12/02/Afghan-security-funds-may-drop-after-2014/UPI-94371322843250).

<sup>30</sup> Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>31</sup> While President Karzai prefers a long-term U.S.-Afghan partnership, he stated at the Bonn summit that there would be a 10-year limit on American forces in Afghanistan after 2014. Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>32</sup> U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker and COMISAF have worked hard to "reset" the relationship with Karzai since they arrived summer 2011. One of his frequent interlocutors noted that Karzai "is exhausted, and he knows he is irritable and unpredictable." Nader Nadery, a commissioner of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, chides Karzai for his "lack of firmness. There is no clarity on where he stands." Nadery sees the president's tolerance of corrupt activity as a major weakness. Yet despite these failings, many Afghans still see him as currently the only leader who can balance the myriad rivalries and swirling tensions that beset Afghan national politics, in particular the concern that Tajik leaders may be girding for an all-out civil war once the U.S. departs. The assassination of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, the Tajik head of Karzai's High Peace Council, reinforced those concerns. Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>33</sup> The U.S. plans to push Afghan forces out front in more operations, if only to determine their readiness to take the lead. Afghans will have to step up if the three stated objectives of the military campaign are to be accomplished – to secure the south, the populated corridor along Highway One up to Kabul, and key areas of the east, especially the crucial provinces of Paktia, Paktika, and Khost. The south has been greatly stabilized over the past year; however, Taliban strongholds of Zhari, Panjwayi and Maiwand are still heavily contested. There is a danger of focusing too much on sparsely populated provinces and neglecting the Khost to Gardez corridor, which has a large population and has been both an insurgent stronghold and transit route from the beginning of the war. The only way that the campaign objectives can be achieved is if coalition forces focus on the important areas, and if Afghan security forces take more of the lead. Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>34</sup> The year-old Afghan Local Police (ALP) program is enhancing security in the countryside where the insurgency is based. Currently at 8,500 recruits of its funded and approved 30,000 of mostly farmers who have volunteered and been trained for checkpoint security and village patrol, the program is strongly ISAF-backed. Special Operation Forces train and mentor the ALP and work with Afghan district police chiefs who command and control, pay, and supply the ALP units. Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>35</sup> While the Afghan bureaucracy cannot deliver funds to individual provinces, let alone the district level where 76 percent of the Afghan population ekes out a subsistence living, progress has been made. District governors are able to visit more once contested areas within their districts. Prioritizing needs is essential. Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?"

*Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011,  
[http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>36</sup> A senior U.S. official in Kabul recently declared, "We will not succeed unless the Pakistan safe havens are reduced." He does not believe Pakistan will come around, despite countless U.S. pleas for more action. The United States and Afghanistan will have to neutralize the threat from Waziristan through their own efforts, and indeed these efforts have stepped up dramatically. Linda Robinson, "Is There Hope for Afghanistan?" *Foreign Policy*, November 29, 2011, [http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is\\_there\\_hope\\_for\\_afghanistan](http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/29/is_there_hope_for_afghanistan).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Sally McNamara, "Training Afghanistan's Security Forces: NATO Has Made Solid Progress," The Heritage Foundation, June 16, 2011,  
<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/06/natos-solid-progress-in-training-afghanistans-security-forces>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> On 10 February 2011, LTG Caldwell issued his vision for accelerated progress in 2011 via his memorandum for NTM-A/CSTC-A.

<sup>43</sup> LTG William B. Caldwell, IV, "Commander's Vision for 2011 – Accelerating Progress," February 10, 2011,  
<http://www.aco.nato.int/resources/10/documents/Commander's%20Vision%20for%202011%20-%20Accelerating%20Progress.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> As of February 8, 2012, a new Vision for COMNTM-A was not available. It is assumed that the Accelerate Progress Vision (Figure 3) is still current.

<sup>50</sup> LTG Daniel P. Bolger, Memorandum for NTM-A/CSTC-A, Commander Sends #1 – Priorities, November 5, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> LTG Daniel P. Bolger, NTM-A/CSTC-A Organization as of 5 November 2011.

<sup>52</sup> John Podesta, et al, "How to Prepare Afghanistan for US Withdrawl," *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-to-prepare-afghanistan-for-us-withdrawal/2011/08/18/gIQAry26UJ\\_print.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-to-prepare-afghanistan-for-us-withdrawal/2011/08/18/gIQAry26UJ_print.html).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghan Strategy Begins to Make Gains," *Brookings*, The Brookings Institution, December 12, 2011, [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/1207\\_afghanistan\\_ohanlon.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/1207_afghanistan_ohanlon.aspx).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> The focus shift would be a rapid development given the potential for an earlier transition by end-2013, per the SECDEF's comments on February 2, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Michael O'Hanlon, "Afghan Strategy Begins to Make Gains," *Brookings*, The Brookings Institution, December 12, 2011, [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/1207\\_afghanistan\\_ohanlon.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/1207_afghanistan_ohanlon.aspx).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.